1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

PART ONE [p.17]

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

121 *The object of Part One is* (1) *to describe the present social structure of the Ovimbundu, and* (2) *to suggest significant elements that this social structure has or may have for the programme of Christian missions among this people.*

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LIFE

127 HAD my historical survey revealed a detailed description of
122 Umbundu social structure made at some former time, it would also be useful to make comparisons with the present state of affairs. Since there is no such witness out of the past, it is only possible to describe and analyse that which at present exists. For this purpose some excerpts from Umbundu narratives are presented and references made to certain folk-tales and proverbs. The basis of the analysis and description rests more especially, however, upon notes and impressions gathered in field-work over a period of years and upon a considerable number of genealogical tables and schedules of marriage arrangements.[1] These latter are referred to here only to a certain extent. I hope to treat these more fully later. The subject of marriage properly belongs to the field of social structure, but because of its importance I hope to devote a chapter to it. Only certain of the genealogical tables are presented fully and in their several aspects, while the others have served as basis and background for the whole of this part of the study.

565 The most significant historical allusion to the social structure
175 of the Ovimbundu which I have found was an observation of Pinheiro de Lacerda about 1790. 'These are they of the Highlands who are made up of two "systems" the one call themselves
[266] "Quimbundos" (i.e. Ovimbundu), (these do not eat human flesh): the others are called "Quimbangalas" (i.e. the royal households of
[782] Imbangala stock), who eat it, and when they make their sacrifice, at which all together attend, then all eat the "Makongo".'[2]

[1] I have 192 of the former and 75 of the latter.

[2] *Annaes Maritimos & Coloniaes*, 5a Ser., p. 488.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

631 life and each could be taken as a unit complete in itself. Individual studies and comparisons of one with another would provide much valuable material. Familiarity with individuals and groups belonging to all the major tribal groups, and study of their folk-lore and customs has led me to conclude that as in language, so in social structure and in culture, the differences are of small account. In offering illustrative material, I shall give its tribal source.

The King

643 To describe the royal office and functions it would be necessary
177 to use the past tense. That reason, along with others, leads me to exclude this subject from the present study. Effective European occupation of the country and government by direct rule[1] have atrophied the royal office among the Ovimbundu until to-day kings survive as hardly more than living museum pieces. This being the case, I shall only enumerate the royal functions, very briefly characterize them, and pass on to describe other and living parts of the Umbundu social organism.

643 The principal functions of the royal office were:
776 1. *Religious.* The spirits of the king's ancestors were the principal national deities. The king was not only high priest but also the visible vice-regent and incarnation of the spirits. The [778] sacrifices at the royal shrine, *kakokoto* (literally, at the skulls), the place of the royal skulls, were for the nation in order:

643 (*a*) *To control the elements*, i.e. to ensure a sufficient supply of
372 rain and avoid the dangers caused by hail, by lightning, &c. Also
789 to control fire by providing a new fire properly (ceremonially) kindled from which everyone took his fire. A king's reign was spoken of as 'during the Water of Lord So-and-so' (*Kovava a Ñalã Ngandi*), or 'during the Fire of Lord So-and-so' (*Kondalu ya Ñalã Ngandi*).

241 (*b*) *To ensure fertility*, toward which desideratum the royal
644 marriage had great influence. The queen's special province was agriculture and her kitchen was sanctified by human sacrifice to [782] guarantee the national food supply. Ceremonially treated seed was distributed to be mixed with the seed of each granary.

[1] 'Direct rule' is applied in most parts of Africa where European settlement is the predominant consideration and also where centralized government is the ideal. 'Indirect rule' is best illustrated in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanganyika Territory.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Oluse	*Oluina*
RELIGIOUS	
Regular village worship including agricultural festivals; village headman is also priest.	Family observances including occasional propitiations in case of illness, death, or other misfortunes; for desired economic advantages; mortuary rites. Family head is also priest.

Classificatory System of Relationship. The relationships of the wider kinship groups are quite largely extensions of those of the household, but the Ovimbundu, in common with all people who have a classificatory system, extend these relationships not only further but in quite different ways than do those who have the European (Roman) system. One who would understand the Ovimbundu must understand the Umbundu family from the inside—not as from motives of mere intellectual curiosity but as an Ocimbundu understands it. In order to demonstrate this family structure it will be necessary to present tables and diagrams. Hambly did a very creditable piece of work toward demonstrating the structure of the Umbundu family.[1] I doubt that anyone staying among them an equally short period of time, not knowing their language, could have done better in this respect unless he had come to the task with very exceptional preparation. It is only just to state this and I feel that it is necessary because so far as I am aware, in the five years since it was published, the book has received no adequate appraisal or review.[2] It must be said, however, that Hambly made some noticeable errors in his use of kinship terms owing to the fact that he did not learn the Umbundu language, and that he evidently failed to understand certain points with regard to the social structure.

For greater clarity and precision I am presenting in separate tables the terms which refer to blood relationship and those which refer to relationship by marriage.

[1] W. D. Hambly, op. cit., pp. 189–99.

[2] This book was reviewed in *Africa*, 1935, pp. 391–3, but the reviewer had no first-hand knowledge of the people or their language, which was perhaps his reason for taking up three-fourths of the space at his disposal with questions of orthography. E. W. Smith has taken note of the book (*Africa: What Do We Know of It?*, p. 71), but only to say that it 'is chiefly useful for its description of the material culture'.

233 The cattle herd obtains most of its food by grazing, but in the dry season the grass withers. Childs states[1] that "Herding has been a [609] function of the sister's son, and even now there is a reluctance on the part of the boys to herd for their fathers."

235 462 [844] Chickens are owned and looked after by both men and women, but other animals only by men. Boys may have small stock of their own, and a boy's economic independence most frequently begins with his owning a chicken.

231 Hambly states that goats are more common than any other animal, and that every family has one or more. These animals are not fed or watered, but are allowed to wander to find their own sustenance. Goats are not milked. Young males are castrated. The goat is frequently used in sacrifices. Sheep also are allowed to find their own food; the males are not castrated. Pigs are cared for comparatively carefully, receiving water and a daily supply of sweet potatoes and their leaves, together with some corn. Male pigs are castrated.[2]

APICULTURE[3]

[439] Beeswax was an important item of trade in the caravan days, and is still sold to Portuguese traders' stores, where it is massed into large rectangular cakes for export. Honey is eaten alone or with manioc, and [262] a fermented beer called *ochasa* is made by adding honey to corn-beer. [273] Fibre strainers are used for cleaning the wax, and large shallow baskets [252] are employed for drying the honey in the sun.

Large cylindrical hives, which are private property, are placed high in the trees. These are made by removing a cylinder of bark and lashing the halves together with strands of bark, forming a hive which has a diameter of one foot.

In Elende honey is removed from the hives during the months of August and December. One man ascends the tree in order to lower the hive with a long rope of bark or plaited fibre, while beneath the tree men are prepared to take the hive, which is opened over a smoky fire.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

326 782 *Smithing.* The profession of blacksmith or *ocivinda* is an important one, and, like hunting and divining, is sacred and is entered with special ritual. Often, but not always, these three professions are passed on by inheritance. For smithing two years' apprenticeship to a member of the profession is necessary, and is usually entered upon at the age of eighteen. At the end of this period the master examines his pupil, and makes tools for him, especially the heavy hammer or *onjundo* which is regarded as symbolic of his craft. For the inauguration ceremony the boy provides four chickens (2 male, 2 female), a dog, and a goat; the blood of these animals is sprinkled on his tools, and their flesh is eaten at a feast [553] attended by the villagers. Throughout the procedure the boy remains standing on the small anvil. Finally he is asked to choose his professional name; he then steps down from the anvil a qualified blacksmith.

(1) Childs, 1949, p.109. (2) Hambly, op.cit., p.154.
(3) Hambly, (4) 1934.

Formerly it was believed that a smith owed his skill to the help of the spirit of a person whom he had killed, and wooden effigies of this person were kept by the smith.(1) 326 782

The principal products of a blacksmith's forge are axe-heads, hoe blades,(2) tools for mat-making, arrowheads, knives, and brass bracelets. Iron, which is fairly plentiful, was formerly smelted over charcoal fires.(3) Today smiths use scrap iron. 325 412

Pottery

Pot-making is a part of women's work among the Ovimbundu. A wheel is not used. Clay is mixed with a silicate, usually gravel, rolled out in long ropes, and the pot built by the coiling process.(4) Pots are ornamented when wet by making deep incisions with a piece of gourd; they are then sun-dried, and fired in a kiln of dry grass. Pots are used as water-containers, as cooking vessels and as vessels for storing corn and beans, and, when made in a very large size, for brewing beer.(5) 323 [462]

No ritual attaches to pot-making, except at the opening of a new clay-pit, when, in the presence of both men and women from the village, the medicine-man sacrifices a chicken over the open pit.(6) [782]

Weaving and Spinning

Looms have not been used among the Ovimbundu since they have been a people, although progenitors of the kingly families who came from the Bangala or Congo groups may have done weaving. Trade cloth has been known and used by the Ovimbundu for nearly 300 years.(7) Skins have been used in remote areas; Hambly when he mentions bark-cloth as being worn by the Ovimbundu is probably referring to the Ngangela. Spun cotton, however, is used for repairs, and there is a cotton plant in most gardens. Spinning is done always by men.(8) 286 439 [281] [287] [283] 462

Basketry

All girls learn to make baskets, although some become more proficient than others. Knowledge of basket-making implies also an understanding of dyeing, since coloured strands of grass are interwoven to make geometric patterns.(9) Baskets, and also basket-trays, are usually made by the coiling process.(10) 285 462 [382]

(1) Hambly, (2) 1934, pp.158-60. The ceremony was described from Njangolo village in Elende.
(2) See Cashmen, 1944, pp.140-1.
(3) For details of the blacksmith's forge and tools, see Hambly, op.cit., pp.160-1; Cashmen, 1944, pp.139, 140, 145-6.
(4) See Hambly, op.cit. Plates XXXIII and XXXIV, and Childs, 1949, Plate VIII.
(5) Hambly, op.cit., p.168; Cashmen, op.cit., pp.144-5.
(6) Hambly, op.cit., p.169.
(7) Childs, personal communication. See also Childs, 1949, p.171, note 1.
(8) See Hambly, p.177, and Cashmen, 1944, p.136.
(9) Red, yellow, black, and brown dyes are used. For a description of the process, see Hambly, op.cit., pp.170-1.
(10) See Hambly, op.cit., p.171, and Cashmen, op.cit., pp.141-2 for details of basket-making. Also for illustrations Hambly, op.cit. and Childs, 1949.

Mat-making

462 285 [412] The making of mats is a specialised craft for men. Generally elderly men are the mat-makers. Two tools are used, a borer and a needle, both products of the blacksmith's forge. Hambly[1] describes the making of reed sleeping mats, large mats used for partitions, and string bags. There are four distinct types of mats, each of which has its specialist.[2]

Leather-work

282 Leather pouches worn on a broad leather belt are part of the essential equipment of the hunter. The pouch is square, rectangular, or semi-cylindrical in shape, and may be decorated with cross-shaped patterns, or brass-headed nails used for decorative effect. Hide is also used for the seats of four-legged wooden stools. Hides are crudely dressed: they are soaked, the inner surface rubbed with ashes, the hair scraped away, and the hide pegged out.[3]

Wood-carving

323 [413] Wood-carving, which is men's work, includes the following specialisations: doors, windows and their frames; coffins; beds, tables and chairs; mortars, pestles, grinding-handles, and handles for various iron implements; stools, household utensils, carved images etc.; drums and other musical instruments; canoes (dug-outs and coracles).[4] Illustrations are given by Hambly.[5]

TRADE

438 484 791 [982] Caravan trade is now confined to short journeys when corn, beans and beeswax are carried by men and women porters to the traders' stores. Formerly however it was an important feature of tribal life. Each caravan had its professional leader, and was accompanied by a diviner or medicine-man. Before a caravan started out, a ceremony was performed at which the principal performers were the village headman and the medicine-man. The head of the former headman was brought from its box, sewn in oxhide; blood from a sacrificed animal was sprinkled on the head, and invocation was made to the deceased by the village headman, asking for good fortune for the journey.[6]

438 436 Today the Ovimbundu exchange products among themselves both by barter and the use of Portuguese money,[7] but there are no large markets except in the towns.

[439] 438 The "trade-agreements" between the Ovimbundu kingdoms and between the Ovimbundu and other tribes have been mentioned above.[8] Accompanying these, regional industrial and commercial specialisations within Ovimbundu country developed. Thus in the middle of the last century

(1) Hambly, op.cit., pp.169-70.
(2) Childs, 1949, p.109.
(3) Hambly, op.cit., p.176.
(4) Childs, op.cit., p.110.
(5) Op.cit., Plates XIII to XXI.
(6) Hambly, op.cit., p.156.
(7) For details of Ovimbundu units of measurement see Hambly, op.cit., p.157.
(8) p.9.

611 dispersed. Both groups have ritual leaders, whose offices are quite dis-
613 tinct. Barnes' suggestion(1) is that the two groups must be father's patrilineage and mother's matrilineage, with the qualification mentioned below.

613 The *oluse* consists of a large number of village groups, some of which
622 recognise mutual relationship,(2) but with no recognised head (other than the village headmen) except in the case of the royal families. Land is
[428] owned by the *oluse* and passed on within it from father to son, or from elder to younger brother. Succession to village or tribal office, from village headman to king, descends in the same way.(3) Ritual leadership
[346] within the *oluse* lies with the village headman, who is in charge of the spirit-hut *(etambo)* of the guardian spirit of the village (or of the nuclear *oluse* within the village), and who officiates at regular village worship, including agricultural festivals.

613 The *oluina*, on the other hand, is a dispersed and apparently larger
428 group, whose members live with their various paternal lines of descent. The size of the *oluina* is unknown; Childs merely refers to it as a "large
604 and widespread organization, with a recognized head". The office of head of the *oluina (ukulu wepata)* descends from mother's brother to sister's son. Negotiable and moveable property, including cattle and trade goods,
[592] is owned by the *oluina* and inherited by the sister's son. Formerly the mother's elder brother had great powers over his sister's sons, and was even able to pawn them or sell them into slavery, to meet his own debts. The patrilocal household is usually responsible for training children, es-
[582] pecially during their early years, but they are frequently sent to the *oluina* (i.e. to the mother's brother) for at least a part of their education. At death or divorce of parents, children go to the *oluina*.

43 The head *(ukulu wepata)* of the *oluina* is usually both the legal and
782 spiritual head of the group, although today the two functions are often divided. He is in charge of the spirit hut *(etambo)* of the guardian spirit of the *oluina* (of whom there may be more than one, and of whom he becomes one after death). He leads the *oluina* in propitiatory rituals carried out in case of illness, death, or other misfortunes within the group, or in prayers made for desired economic advantages. (Apparently no regular rituals are carried out by the *oluina*.) The *ukulu wepata* may or may not be at the same time a village headman; if he is, he will be priest of two lines and have charge of two spirit huts; if he is not, there may be two (or more) priests in the village, each in charge of the spirit-hut of his *oluse* or *oluina*.

The onzlz yohonji and the onzlz yohumba

613 The *oluse* and the *oluina* are both divided into male and female
602 "sides": the *onzlz yohonji* (the side of the bow) and the *onzlz yohumba* (the side of the basket). It has been noted above that uterine brothers
582 and sisters belong to the same *oluse* and *oluina*, but to the male or female side in each, according to sex. The composition of these "sides" is

(1) Loc.cit.
(2) If some villages within the *oluse* cannot trace mutual relationship, the *oluse* should perhaps be called a patri-clan rather than a patrilineage.
(3) But see below, p.29.

On arriving at the site the boy and girl cut and plant the first pole, which is to be a part of the new *etambo* (spirit hut). The boy and girl must take part ceremonially in each operation of building the hut, and when it is built they ignite the new fire. A hen and a cock are killed, cooked on the new fire, and eaten inside the *etambo* by all who have taken part in building it. The headman and his wife must remain on the new site to keep the fire alight; other villagers may commute from the old village or erect temporary grass shelters on the new site. Houses are built by the occupants themselves, although men may give each other mutual help, for which there is a gift of food and beer. The *onjango* is usually built by the communal labour of all boys and men, and on its completion a simple ritual is performed to promote harmony within and to welcome the spirits, who are believed to sleep in the *onjango* and to take part in all discussions within it.(1)

The village group: composition

Childs describes the relationship of the villagers of Ngendo to each other as typical of Umbundu country. Most of the heads of households are related agnatically to their respective section-heads (who are presumably also related agnatically to each other, since the village is based on the *olusse* group); Childs does not however discuss the relation of section heads to each other or to the village headman. He gives a table in which the householders are divided into six categories according to their relationship to their various section-heads:

1.	Paternal relatives of section head:	Section A (headman's)	21
		" B	2
		" C	1
		" D	2
			26
2.	Maternal relatives of section head:	Section B	4
		" C	1
		" D	1
			6
3.	Sisters' sons (or daughters)(2)	Section B	4
		" C	1
			5
4.	Relatives by marriage	Section A	2
		" B	1
			3
5.	Relationship not definitely known	Section B	2
6.	Former slaves	Section A	1
		" B	1
			2

(1) This section is based on Childs, 1949, pp.37-9.
(2) Who could, of course, have been included as maternal relatives and paternal relatives, since they belong both to the *olusse* and to the *olusiu*.

621 The total number of households is 44, or 48 including those of the four
592 section heads. It should be noted that there is a discrepancy in Child's
114 figures (apart from an obvious misprint): (1) in another context he writes that section B contains only 12 houses (not even *households*), while from this table it would appear that section B has 15 household heads, including that of the section head; and section C is said to have 6 households, while only 4 (again counting the section head) are accounted for in this table.

591 Childs states(2) that the incidence of patrilocal marriage in Ngendo
114 is fairly typical of Umbundu country, but unfortunately gives little information regarding the relationship of the various spouses to each other or concerning the location of the villages from which they came. Matrilocal marriage is recognised as a possibility: of the three relatives by marriage listed above, one was a husband of a daughter of the headman, another the widow of a younger brother of the headman, who should have been inherited by a younger brother (?) or a mother's brother of the deceased, or, failing that, could have returned to her father's village. Of those listed above as sisters' children, two were widows who had come to live in the village with their mother's brothers.(3)

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The village headman(4)

622 The village headman *(sekulu yimbo)* is also the head of the *oluse*
793 which forms the nucleus of the village group, and is related agnatically to most of the householders. He alone may speak of the village as *imbo liange* (my village); the heads of sections, who are also called *sekulu*(5)
● 782 may speak possessively only of their own sections *(ocitiwila cange)*, and other villagers speak only of "our village" *(imbo lietu)*.(6) The headman functions as both priest and legal head of the village. As priest he has in his compound the *etambo* (spirit hut), in which the insignia of office are kept, and in which he prays to the ancestral spirits. Upon occasion he may sleep there, usually offering a prayer to the spirits when he wakes during the night. The *etambo* may also be
[346] used as a lodging place for respected guests, or as a store-house for possessions not used every day. Childs states that he officiates at regular village worship, including agricultural festivals; Hambly adds that he may lead the people in offering sacrifices when epidemics of
613 sickness break out in the village. It has been noted above(7) that it is the function of the *oluina* head to lead such rituals when illness occurs within the *oluina*. In general the village head is responsible for
[622] matters - particularly agriculture and public health - which affect the whole village; individuals, both for protection and for help and other

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.28, line 27, where "twenty-four" should read "forty-four".
(2) On the basis of the 192 genealogies and 74 marriage-schedules which he collected. He does not, unfortunately, give examples or show how the comparison was made.
(3) Based on Childs, op.cit., pp.25-31.
(4) This section is based on Childs, op.cit., pp.36-7.
(5) It has been noted above that *sekulu* is used for all men (and some women) of the grandfather's generation.
(6) op.cit., p.283. (7) p.18.

regent and incarnation" of the spirits. Sacrifices were made at the royal shrine or *kokoloto* ("at the skulls"), where the skulls of past chiefs were kept, in order to:-

(i) control the elements i.e. to ensure a sufficient supply of rain and avoid the dangers caused by storms; also to control fire by providing a new fire ceremonially kindled[1] from which everyone took his fire.

(ii) to ensure fertility, towards which the royal marriage had great influence. The queen's special province was agriculture and her kitchen was sanctified by human sacrifice to guarantee the national food supply. Ceremonially treated seed was distributed to be mixed with the seed of each granary.

(b) *To represent the country in its external relations*, principally to make trade agreements with other chiefs, or to make war on other peoples in order to get tribute and plunder. The war leader *(Kesongo)* has his own residence entirely separate from that of the king, whom he must not meet face to face except on certain ceremonial occasions.[2] Each king must inaugurate his reign with a war, during which or after which he must ceremonially "eat the old one" *(oku lia ekongo)* - who was usually a specially fattened slave cooked with the flesh of the principal animals commonly eaten.[3]

(c) *To dispense justice.* The chief's court or *olusenje* was the supreme court of the chiefdom. The chief had the final word in any case, but most chiefs acted according to custom.

(d) *To protect himself and the chiefdom*, the chief could use "magic" (?) which might have been accounted witchcraft or murder if practised without authority: e.g. the ritual murder of a pregnant woman, or of the children whose lives were required for building and furnishing the queen's kitchen.

(e) The chief made much use of divination in order to carry out his office. For this purpose he had his own diviner *(citue cosoma)*, who was of the blood royal; but he also consulted diviners of other regions and types.

Succession to chiefship is in the male line,[4] from father to son, elder brother to younger brother or brother's son, or sometimes to one more distantly related. The election is made by the councillors whose duty it is (?), ordinarily before the old chief's death is announced. These same councillors may depose an unpopular chief, and there have been many such depositions. This "democratic" tendency of the Ovimbundu has been noted by most writers. Childs points out that it is attested by the fact that a chief (formerly as well as today) works in his own fields, and by folk-tales which give incidental and intimate pictures of petty details in the lives of the chiefs†

(1) See above, p.26.
(2) In Bailundu he, with certain other officials, was of the stock of slaves of the state *(ovindili viosoma)*.
(3) Childs, p.21. Many early writers refer to the cannibalism of the "[illegible]" or "Imbangalas" who are thought to have been the Ovimbundu chiefs. (See above, p.8, and also Lacerda and Ravenstein, quoted by Childs, pp.17ff.)
(4) But *inheritance* is said to follow a different line among chiefs from among commoners; possibly inheritance is also in the paternal line. See Childs p.18.

† See footnote 1, p. 31

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night in the *etambo* praying to or communing with ancestral spirits, when the occasion arises; Suku is regarded as too remote to receive prayers.

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While cooking, a woman may spill a little meal on the ground for the spirits; at a meal, a person may spill a little food or beer for the same purpose. A portion of the meat at a feast may likewise be sacrificed, but it is often a less desirable portion, such as the intestines.(1)

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Agricultural rituals were held before planting, at which time the headman and his wife had intercourse in their field and sacred seed from the chief's granary was distributed, a few grains to be mixed with the seed to be planted on each plot. When the maize began to ripen a few ears were sent to the chief before any were eaten.(2)

DIVINERS(3)

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The word *ocimbanda* is used both for a diviner and for a maker of medicines. To distinguish the two, the diviner may be called *ocimbanda congombo* ("of the basket"), the herbalist *ocimbanda coviti* ("of trees or sticks"). Some practitioners are both diviner and herbalist. A female diviner is called *combula*.(4) An *ocimbanda* frequently specialises in a certain kind of case;(5) and among the members of the profession there are many degrees of proficiency. One may work only in his own village, another may be consulted on matters of concern to the whole district or chiefdom; others go on professional journeys carrying their baskets, and accumulate profits in animals and cloth. The greater the reputation of the diviner, the greater the charges he makes for his services.

The tasks of the *ocimbanda* are:-

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(a) To discover the cause of sickness, death, or any evil which has befallen the individual or the community. Sickness and death are always believed to be due either to the workings of spirits who are demanding sacrifices, or to living enemies who have malicious spirits under their control or who have bought potent charms. The diviner, after consulting the spirit who speaks in and through his basket, names the spirit who is causing the trouble and tells the victim what its demands are, or, if the enemy is a living person, indicates in a general manner from whence the trouble comes, e.g. to a woman "Your baskets are too well made; you are hated because of them", or, to a man, "This illness was found on a journey taken to collect a debt". If requested, the diviner makes a countercharm to offset that which has caused the ill.

(b) To interpret omens and dreams.

(c) To give advice on personal problems.

(d) To dispense medicines and charms.

(e) To bring or withhold rain, or to see who is guilty of withholding it. [789]

(1) Ibid., see also Cushman, loc.cit.
(2) Childs, personal communication.
(3) Based on Tucker, 1940.
(4) Hambly, (3) 1934.
(5) Ibid.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

O. Dapper (Description de l'Afrique, 1732, p. 369) shows a scene in which an ax, such as I obtained from the Vasele country, is being used for beheading a slave.

Cavazzi (Istorica descrizione, etc., Bologna, 1687) describes the three kingdoms of Congo, Matamba, and northern Angola. The poison ordeal, the scapegoat, the blacksmith's bellows (pp. 101, 170) are all traits known to the Ovimbundu. The musical instrument made from a large gourd, which has a ridged board attached for rubbing with a stick, is the type I collected. Cavazzi pictures the double iron gong and the long drum held between the knees. He also shows a rain-maker (p. 214) and the sacrifice of two hundred victims at the accession of a king (p. 210).

Consideration of the history of maize in Africa is of importance in connection with these early writings, as this grain is the staple agricultural product of the Ovimbundu. I am indebted to Dr. Berthold Laufer for access to his unpublished research on this subject. From the following facts one may assume that, in all probability, the maize culture of the Ovimbundu was derived from the Congo region before their migration into the Benguela Highlands.

Father Jerome Merolla remarks that maize was growing in the neighborhood of San Salvador (1683–92). The native names were *mampunni* and *massamiuta;* from this corn an alcoholic beverage was prepared. According to Cavazzi (Ehrmann, Geschichte der merkwürdigsten Reisen, VIII, 1794) maize was not intensively cultivated by the Negroes of lower Guinea, though it thrives well and may be harvested twice or thrice a year. The natives said that the grain was brought by the Portuguese, but they did not esteem it highly, and were accustomed to use it as food for pigs.

Bosman (p. 312) records that prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, Negroes were entirely ignorant of *milho* ("maize"). The account of Duarte Lopez preserved by Filippo Pigafetta states that the Negroes consider maize the vilest of all grains, so that it is given to swine. This contempt and lack of knowledge of the food value, combined with ignorance of methods of preparation, suggest a recent introduction (Pigafetta, translation by M. Hutchinson, 1881, p. 40). Dapper (Description de l'Afrique, 1732, p. 345) also mentions the cultivation of maize. Battell lived as prisoner in northern Angola about the year 1600, consequently his records of the use of the great Guinea wheat (maize), which the natives call *mas-imporro*, give early evidence for the use of this grain (Hakluyt Soc., 1901, pp. 9, 11, 67).

V. ECONOMIC LIFE

The words "economic life" are here used with a wide connotation including nature lore, food supply, trade, transport, and industries; all these are combined to form a foundation for every aspect of the social life of the tribe.

The truth of this is realized if one pays attention to the rites connected with occupations. For the hunter there is special training, ritual, and a peculiar mode of burial. Final ceremonies in the initiation of a young blacksmith are associated with sacred acts such as sacrifice of animals and the sprinkling of the tools with their blood. Even the simple occupation of pounding corn requires that the rock shall be dedicated to this purpose by sprinkling the blood of a chicken on the surface. Similarly, a clay pit has to be consecrated before the raw material may be taken for making pottery. A caravan journey is not merely a commercial undertaking; the accompanying medicine-man carries a wooden figure which he consults with regard to the route (Plate XXI, Fig. 5).

Division of labor according to sex is one of the most important principles involved in the economic life, more particularly in occupational groupings, which are strictly observed. Moreover, within any one activity, such as house-building, there are tasks for men only, while other parts of the work are performed exclusively by women or children.

The study of industries is of great importance when a comparison of Umbundu and adjacent cultures is being made. This is particularly true in the instance of wood-carving, an occupation yielding highly specialized products some of which are connected with religious belief and ritual. All artifacts are valuable as criteria of cultural contacts, though their reliability as evidence of trait diffusion naturally varies with their degree of complexity. Study of native industries in relation to European contacts illustrates a cultural process which may result in acceptance, rejection, or ingenious adaptation of new ideas.

That a study of the economic life of a tribe is not merely a recording of material processes and artifacts, is illustrated by observation of the treatment of cattle. This pastoral pursuit naturally falls under a heading "Domestic Animals," but the ideas associated with cattle, including funeral feasts, use of horns on graves, and the wrapping of the royal corpse in o hide, lead directly into important matters of belief and ritual.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP15

224 874 an initiation feast when the training is ended. At the feast all people of the village may be present but they do not dance; only the professional hunters may do so. The boy who is to be initiated must not speak or move until he "feels the spirit on his head"; then he gives meat to the people. After hunters have captured game for the feast, the blood from these animals is used to smear over the bow, arrows, and spear which have been made for the novice by his tutor. [326] This is analogous to the initiation of the young blacksmith who receives blood-sprinkled tools made by the master blacksmith.

224 788 There is in connection with the life and death of the professional hunter a certain amount of ritual and precaution. The night before setting out to hunt is a time of dancing and renewal of the implements of the chase, which are kept in a house specially prepared for them. A hunter who is on the eve of departure calls in other professional hunters to share the ceremony, which includes the rubbing of the bows and other implements with palm oil. A libation of beer is poured on the bows, spears, and arrows, but no medicine-man is present. Some of the bows are never used, because they are merely the symbols of the personality and prowess of dead hunters whose names they have taken. The food and cooking pots of a hunter must never be associated with those of ordinary household use. If a hunter is following the tracks of an animal he must not point with his finger as this action will drive the animal away. The correct way to point is by use of the feathered end of an arrow. The hunter [834] must not sleep with his wife the night before setting out in quest of game.

224 782 I have frequently seen in front of the hut of a hunter a number of skulls of antelope and other animals mounted on poles arranged in circular formation (Plate XXXII, Fig. 2). These skulls seem to be trophies, which are invariably taken away by the hunter if he finds a new home. There is no reason to doubt the statement that these skulls are an offering to the spirits who give good luck in hunting, because such a belief would be in harmony with the general respect for ancestral ghosts, which are thought to influence the affairs of the living.

764 224 On several occasions, notably near Ganda and in the Cassonge country, I have seen the tombs of hunters. These are large structures built of slabs of granite laid with some symmetry. The rock tomb is invariably placed on the top of a commanding eminence of granite. The skulls of animals which the hunter has killed are piled on the top of the cairn, but I do not know whether these are the trophies

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Goats are more common than any other animal; there are few, if any, families which do not own one or more goats. These animals are not fed or watered. Goats are able to exist on almost any kind of vegetation; consequently these animals are, almost without exception, well nourished. Goats are not milked. Kids are born at any time of the year, and the young males are castrated. The hides are used for making bags. The goat has the misfortune to be the most desirable sacrificial animal. This is not entirely due to the fact that it is cheap and easily obtainable. The sheep is said to be unsuitable as a sacrifice, because it does not make a noise when killed. The hair of the goat is used for making an ornament named *osala*, which is worn by medicine-men.

Sheep are of the long-tailed Syrian breed. Like the goats, the sheep are not cared for in any way; they find their own pasture and water, and in doing so may wander for a considerable distance, though they always return to the village at sunset. The males are not castrated. Sheep are not so frequently kept as are goats and pigs. The skin is used for making bags. Twin births of calves, kids, or lambs are not regarded with awe; on the contrary, such births are welcome.

Almost every man keeps one or more dogs, and I have rarely seen a hut in which there were no dogs. Usually young puppies are near the fire, and on the whole dogs are well treated because they are valuable in hunting. They also give warning of the approach of hyenas, lions, and leopards. I have frequently seen a person run into the road to pick up a dog when an automobile is approaching. A tendency to improve the breed of dogs by crossing the lean native animal with a breed of large dogs from South Africa has been mentioned. In contrast with the generally considerate treatment of dogs by the Ovimbundu one has to note the very emaciated and diseased condition of dogs in the Esele country. Among the Ovimbundu dogs are regarded as desirable food.

Sacrifice of a dog at the inauguration of a blacksmith will presently be described. A medicine-man who is about to perform a ceremony for curing the sick has to make a meal of dog's flesh, but otherwise the flesh of the dog is taboo to him. These points of ceremony, taken in conjunction with the food value of the animal, and its use in hunting, show that the dog is highly esteemed.

Poultry are of very mixed breeds. The standards of size and weight are higher than is usual in African chickens, a fact which is perhaps attributable to contact of the Ovimbundu with the Portu-

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Any boy who wishes to become a blacksmith may be trained for the work. It is not necessary that his father should have been a blacksmith. When the youth begins his training he must be eighteen years of age and physically robust. His first duties are the beating of hot iron on the anvil; he is also required to collect and soften fragments of iron. He works very hard but is never allowed to finish anything; the master has to complete the work. 326 874

At the end of two years the youth asks the master blacksmith to examine him. What is more important still, the master is asked to make the heavy hammer (*onjundo*), which is used for beating hot iron on the largest anvil (Plate XXXVIII, Fig. 1). There is no doubt as to the sacredness of this hammer, which is a symbol of the completion of apprenticeship. There is also the idea of the master handing on his skill to the pupil by personally making and presenting the tools. I made repeated efforts before being able to purchase one of these hammers; finally it was procurable only at a high price. The value is due to ritualistic associations, the large quantity of iron used in the making, and the labor required to weld the head to the shaft.

On the day of his inception the boy has to purchase four chickens, two male and two female, one pup, and a goat. The master blacksmith makes all the tools for the apprentice, but ritual centers chiefly in the fabrication of the big hammer (*onjundo*). While the master is making this the boy stands on the small anvil which is close to the ground, between the forge and the large anvil under the tree. 326 796

When the hammer (*onjundo*) is made, and while it is still red-hot, the handle is pushed into the belly of the dog. The goat and the four chickens are then killed. All the tools are brought together so that blood from the slaughtered animals may be sprinkled over them. The flesh of these animals is eaten with corn and beans. "The blacksmith calls many people to help him, and they like to eat the food," concluded my interpreter. [782]

During the entire ceremony, also throughout the feast, the boy stands on the anvil. There he remains until the master says, "You may speak and tell us what name you want." Perhaps the boy says, "I am Ndumbu." The people in the crowd clap hands and make a trilling with their fingers in their open mouths. The boy steps from the anvil; he is a blacksmith. My interpreter continued, "He must work hard and people must pay him. He used to work hard, but the master took the money."

There was an ancient belief that a blacksmith owed his skill to the help of the spirit of a person he had killed. Wooden effigies 326 778

412 fatigue is avoided by the method of holding and swinging so that the work of crushing is done by the weight of the implement.

412 252 Two less usual methods of pulverizing grain are by use of a long pestle, which is worked up and down in a heavy wooden mortar as shown by Plate LXXXIV, Fig. 1, in which Vachokue women are so employed, and the crushing of grain with a cylindrical stone which is rolled on a flat slab. This latter method I judge to be very old, for on a pre-Umbundu site encircled by stone walls I have seen flat slabs of stone and cylindrical rollers. Some of the flat slabs were worn extremely thin in the middle and a few were perforated by the friction.

It is noteworthy that there are rocks especially reserved for the pounding of grain with the wooden mallet. Such rocks are to be [782] found close to every village, and the dedication of a new rock for this purpose requires the killing of a chicken whose blood is sprinkled on the rock.

252 [512] Work of this kind is begun before daybreak. From that time to sunset the pounding of the wooden mallets, accompanied by the singsong of the women, marks the progress of the day's work. At intervals the pounded grain is sifted through the hands and spread out on a basket-work tray, which is shaken to separate the fine meal. The unbroken and partly broken grain is replaced on the rock for further pounding. A small brush of grass is used for bringing together the grain which is dispersed by the blows.

412 171 [852] The sole implement used in agriculture, which is entirely in the hands of women, is the hoe. Of this implement there are several variations according to locality. The Ovimbundu and others of Ngalangi employ the form illustrated in Plate XIII, Fig. 10. The long handles measuring 85 cm no doubt reduce fatigue by minimizing bending. Both hands are used, and, furthermore, the increased length of the handles must give a greater leverage. The smaller hoe used by Ovimbundu women of Elende has short handles only 51 cm (Plate XIII, Fig. 9), while that from the Esele country is distinguished by a broader blade and still shorter handles only 36 cm in length.

412 Included in the outfit of every Umbundu home is the heavy wooden floor beater. This implement, which is fashioned from a single piece of wood, consists of a narrow handle, round in cross section, and a flat portion for beating the moist, newly made, mud floor of the hut. The total length is about 83 cm.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

When the clay was being mixed an old pot was broken and pulverized so that some of the powder might be added to the new pot. There may be the underlying idea of continuity in the potter's art. The potters said, *Sanga yi pita* ("Lest it leak"). There may be no purpose other than the imparting of stability to the new clay.

I was unable to find any trace of ritual except with reference to the opening of a new clay pit. When a pit is first opened both men and women attend. The head of a chicken is twisted off by a medicine-man, then the bird is held over the pit by either a man or a woman. There is no law or ceremony to determine who shall take the first clay from the pit. The art of making pots is in the hands of female specialists so far as the Ovimbundu are concerned. Observation makes clear that women will go for a long distance to obtain clay from the pit which has been opened in a ceremonial manner. On their way to such a pit they pass clay which would serve their purpose well, but they do not use it. Children sometimes amuse themselves by making animals of clay.

The pottery of the Ovimbundu includes cooking vessels of many sizes, water containers, and very large pots for brewing beer (*olombia vi okukela*).

MATS AND BASKETS

This occupation illustrates division of labor on a sex basis. Baskets are made by women, while mat-making is an occupation for males. As with other trades there is specialization. The majority of women are able to make baskets though the skill of individuals varies. All women who have a knowledge of basketry understand the manufacture of dyes. Only a few men make mats; my informant thought that perhaps one man in ten would have the necessary skill. Such specialization is continued into other occupations; for example, only a few men spin cotton thread, while the majority of people buy pottery from expert female potters.

The mat-maker, generally an elderly male, uses two tools, a borer and a needle, both products of the native forge. The borer (*utomo*) for piercing the reeds, consists of a long thin blade in a wooden grip. The needle (*osinja*) is threaded with bark fiber and passed through the holes made by the *utomo*. The bark thread is *ombanja* (plural *olombanja*).

The sleeping mat (*esisa*) is made of reeds which are gathered in the early morning by a man who wets and binds his material into bundles, each of which contains reeds of the same length. The length of the reeds varies, of course, with the size of mat he intends to make.

584 you." There is no infant betrothal. There is not and never was any
[567] compulsion of a girl in marriage, but slave girls were disposed of in marriage by their masters.

832 A girl is not allowed to do anything to show that she loves a boy, for it would be a great shame for her to tell the boy that she loves him. Often a girl who prefers a boy will pretend that she does not like him.
[539] The Ovimbundu have a story which states that a man said, "I will bring my cow to the green grass"; he did so, but the cow would not eat. This expresses the idea that a boy would not like a girl who confessed a preference for him.

MARRIAGE

585 The prospective bride chooses one married woman and six unmarried girls to accompany her to the house prepared by her husband. Here a feast consisting of a pig and some chickens is provided by the husband for the relatives of both families. For three nights the girl returns to the house of her parents while the boy sleeps at his home. The married woman and six girls sleep at the house prepared by the bridegroom. During these days beer is provided by the boy's parents. The prospective husband is ironically addressed as *sandombua*. *Ndombua* means bridegroom, *sa* is an abbreviation of *isia* meaning father. The term "father bridegroom" refers to the fact that the youth is a potential husband only; the marriage has not been consummated.

On the fourth day the bride brings her supply of domestic utensils. These are the cooking pots (*olombia*); the wooden spoons (*ovito*); the brush of grass for sweeping (*olueyo*); some meal; also the pounder (*upi*). For the first month the wife is not allowed to cook in her own home; she cooks food in the home of her husband's parents and sends
[269] it to the council house (*onjango*) where her husband takes his meals with other men according to Umbundu custom. At the end of the first month of married life the mother of the husband invites any three old women who have been happily married to lay the hearth
[782] stones in the new home. Each of the old women brings a stone for the hearth. A chicken is killed and its blood is sprinkled on the hearth stones. While the young wife is preparing food at the new hearth, she is helped by the old women. If the girl is stirring with the big wooden spoon, one of the old women places her own hands over those of the girl. There is this kind of guidance in every action.

I understand that at the present day virginity in a bride is not so highly valued as in former days. The old custom was an examination

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

lion visits a village an old man talks to it through the palisade. The conversation is carried on in a series of grunts, after which the lion goes away. One of my informants said that "lions and leopards are watchdogs for old men who have died." When one of these animals kills a domestic animal or a person, the assumption is that the predatory animal was sent by a deceased old man who requires a sacrifice. Ngonga of Elende said that "when a lion killed a man it was a sign that there was a bad spirit from the man's family within the lion." There is divination to find who requires a sacrifice, since some ancestor has been neglected. W. C. Bell relates an Umbundu tale of a woman who changed herself into a wild animal, but I was not able to ascertain that belief in transformation is held today (*Jour. Amer. Folk-Lore*, XXXV, p. 129).

I am unable to prove that the Ovimbundu have definite ideas of the nature of a future life, but they certainly think of survival after death, and have clear concepts of good and bad spirits who influence the fortunes of the living. There is no idea of punishment or reward, but a bad man has a bad ghost which can do evil things. Spirits will follow their relations on earth; moreover, they will come to the house of bows where their property is preserved.

A man returning from a hunt with trophies, or from the collection of honey, will leave some of these on a grave. There is no idea of spirits in rivers and trees, but the first tree felled for building the house of a man of importance must not be allowed to fall violently. This may imply a belief in a tree-spirit.

Spirits move at night only and mentioning the dead by name or whistling at night calls spirits. There are many instances of sacrifice connected with the idea of a spirit who has to be appeased. The medicine-man can induce a spirit to enter an image of wood. Thus there are wooden images containing spirits useful to the blacksmith. There is an image which can show travelers the right path when the medicine-man consults it (Plate XXI, Figs. 3, 5).

Osande is a good spirit who will "bring good luck and do good things for the people, while *Ondele* is a bad spirit who harms the people," said Ngonga. When a person is sick, mad, or dizzy he has *Ondele*. Only a powerful *ocimbanda* can cast out *Ondele*. *Ocilulu* is the general name for a disembodied spirit, either good or bad. An *Ekisi* is an *Osande;* apparently the terms are synonymous.

A spirit can die a second time. There is, for instance, an evil bird of the night whose name is *Esuvi*. This bird is able to catch a spirit in order to make it die a second death. A living person

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

was too light to make it effective as a tool or weapon (Plate XIII, Fig. 4). At Bailundu I was informed that an ax of this kind is used in a medicine-man's dance which is intended to cure a man who is sick because a spirit has entered into him. The sickness may have occurred because the man has broken a promise. 755

The medicine-man, or sometimes the patient himself, dances violently, meanwhile cutting about him with the ax (*omutaka*), which is finally used for killing a little pig whose blood is drunk by the sick man. This is the ritual that was previously mentioned in describing divination.

The following are important ceremonial objects: The ax *ekuva* (Plate XIII, Fig. 5) was the one used for killing slaves who were eaten at the death of a king. This object was secured in the Vasele country near Vila Nova de Selles. It is of handsome appearance, having a copper circle inlaid into the iron blade. A spear from Bailundu is likewise important because of its use in ritual (Plate XIII, Fig. 8). Before war and hunting this spear was thrust first into an ox then into a slave. The human and animal flesh were cooked together and eaten from the same pot. The female figure used by the medicine-man for consultation with regard to the correct path for a caravan has been described. A carved wooden post obtained from Bailundu was set up at cross-paths so that it might be visited by a sick person or his representative who would make sacrifice there. 411 [266] 782

Without parallel among ceremonial objects used by the Ovimbundu is a small wooden cloth-covered box from Bailundu. This contains a piece of root of cylindrical form tightly bound with cloth having at one end a cowrie shell. The box is the shrine of *Kandundu*, for whom a small hut is built in order to contain the box. Any one who sees the contents of the shrine is said to become blind. *Kandundu* is believed to be the "spirit of dreaming who makes swellings come on the body." 778

Antelope horns are in general use as containers of magical potions. One horn from Bailundu is used for holding sweet beer which is drunk by a person afflicted by bad dreams. A large horn with a piece of fur attached, also from Bailundu, is named *ocindiko*. The horn contains a mixture of fat and charcoal which is heated near camp after sunset, when men are on the march. The spreading fumes keep away lions and thieves. It was said that a thief is deterred because the fumes make him cough. 789 237

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30) 1934 FP 13 Mbundu FP13

326 merly obtained. Blacksmiths now smelt scrap-iron from European sources.
[582] Among the Ovimbundu, blacksmiths are restricted in marriage only by those kinship laws arising from their classificatory system of relationships, and the operation of a system of cross-cousin marriage. The smiths are not an endogamous group, and the occupation is not hereditary.

But despite these differences, which are not quite in harmony with the general body of custom relating to Negro blacksmiths, the Ovimbundu preserve ritual which is part of a widely distributed attitude toward workers in iron.

When a boy begins his training he should be about eighteen years of age and physically robust. He is required to collect and soften fragments of iron in the charcoal fire, to work the bellows, and to beat iron on the anvil, but for a time he is not allowed to make implements, the chief of which are hoe blades and axe heads. At the end of two years the novice asks his master to examine him, and preparations are made for an inauguration ceremony should the youth have proved sufficiently skilled to become an independent blacksmith.

326 On the day of initiation the boy has to buy four chickens, two male and
782 two female, one pup, and a goat. The master blacksmith has already made a complete set of tools for presentation to his pupil, but the big hammer (onjundo) is not quite completed until the day of initiation. While the final touches are being given to this object the novice stands still on a small stone anvil which is situated between the forge and the large anvil.

When the hammer is completed, and while it is still red hot, it is thrust into the belly of the pup provided by the novice. The goat and the four chickens are killed and some of their blood is sprinkled over the new tools which are gathered in a heap. The blacksmiths invite their friends to feast on the flesh of the sacrificed animals.

326 The boy remains standing on the anvil[1] until the master says, "You may
553 speak and tell us what name you want." Perhaps the boy says, "I am Ndumbu;" then the people clap hands and trill with their fingers in their open mouths. My interpreter said, "The boy will work hard and people will pay him. He used to work hard but his master took the pay."

326 Near the large anvil may be seen one or more wooden figures which are
778 still regarded as essential to the work of the blacksmith. I was informed that a blacksmith owes his skill to the aid of a spirit of some person he has killed, and that this spirit uses the wooden figure as a dwelling place. If this information is reliable the wooden figure is of the nature of a shrine, but I was not able to learn of any ceremony for inducing a spirit into the wooden figure. The impression left was that the spirit of the murdered person re-

[1] [i.e., on the day of initiation of apprentice blacksmith. -- Analyst]

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30)1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

sided permanently in the wooden figure. This ritual murder is now impossible, but the wooden figures are still used in the way described. 326 778

Women are never engaged in blacksmiths' work; neither are they employed as wood carvers. Among men wood carving is a specialized occupation, and within the craft itself are men who deal solely with one branch of the work. Thus in a village perhaps only one man is capable of making a drum, while another carves life-like wooden figures of animals, and a third specializes in the fabrication of household implements. [462] 532

Among the Ovimbundu women are the only potters, but I found just one exception in the case of a man who said that he learned the potter's craft in eastern Angola among the Vachokue. No ritual is connected with the making of pottery, but I observed that women always frequented one pit for their clay and in doing so passed better clay which was more accessible. I learned that a clay pit has to be consecrated by a medicine-man who kills a chicken and sprinkles the blood in the pit. All women at some time learn the arts of pottery making and basketry, but by the process of selection the industries become concentrated in the hands of the most skillful. 462 323 [782]

Only women make baskets; a craft in which they are skilled, especially in the gathering of plants and the extraction of dyes of soft shades. Such dyes have considerable endurance even though exposed to bright sunlight. Imported dyes are now competing with indigenous products, but the latter are still preferred in most localities. One might expect that women who are skilled in basket making would be expert weavers of mats, but this is not so. Mat making is in the hands of men who are skilled specialists, and within the mat making industry are at least three principal divisions of the craft, one for each type of mat. 462 285

Men spin cotton for mending clothes, but I have not seen women so engaged. I did not see any looms in use in Angola, but they survived up to a few years ago, and in the youth of my interpreter, who was about thirty years of age, looms worked by men were plentiful. 283 462 286

House building shows a division of labor according to age and sex. Men are responsible for cutting the poles, digging the trench in which these uprights are set, and binding the cross-pieces with bark. Men are likewise responsible for plastering the walls and laying the thatch. Women carry water to the clay pit and transport the puddled clay to the men who are plastering the walls. Children, some of them so young that they have to be rescued from a swampy grave, delight in puddling the clay with their feet. The rectangular pit is always as near the house as possible in order to minimize the labor of transport. I suggested that some of the tasks should 462 331

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30) 1934 FP 13 Mbundu FP13

462 331 be reversed and asked whether men could not carry the water. I was told that such a man would be laughed at and called a "he-woman." Yet division of labor does not imply sex inferiority, and ridicule would arise from incongruity.

MEDICINE-MEN

759 791 The training of a medicine-man (ocimbanda) and a medicine-woman (chambula) involves few formalities, but this class of work requires that a novice shall have "spirit in the head." When visited by a sick boy the medicine-man shakes his divination basket and if a certain combination of objects appears, he says, "Your father was ocimbanda and his spirit wants you." The boy who is thus adopted has to accompany the medicine-man, his master, carrying apparatus and standing near to play a small friction drum while the master is shaking his divination basket.

Specialization among medicine-men is carried to great degree of refinement, especially among those practitioners who profess therapeutic knowledge. I employed three medicine-men to collect plants, of which they appeared to have an expert knowledge. Umbundu names were given and the curative properties of each plant were explained with enthusiasm and evident conviction. The men were undoubtedly sincere in their own beliefs. A specialist who can cure blood in the urine, and another who is said to treat dizziness successfully, are greatly respected. The rainmaker is ocimbanda opulia, "the medicine-man of the rain," who dances while flourishing a cow-tail switch, and blowing a shrill whistle intermittently.

Ocimbanda is of course distinguished from onganga, since the former is concerned with socially beneficent tasks such as those mentioned, while [754] the latter may cause sickness, impotence, and sterility. In earlier days the task of finding sorcerers (onganga) by use of the poison ordeal was that of an ocimbanda. Medicine-women are called in to take care of difficult cases of childbirth, and I have seen a medicine-woman painting the face of a pregnant woman, who thereafter observed certain taboos.

Space will not permit enumeration of the contents of a divination basket and the significance attached to each item; neither can I give details of ceremonies for curing the sick or bringing a thief back to the village, but the foregoing notes suffice to show that the craft is specialized and still important. A medicine-man ceremonially washes a king or chief on rare occasions. He makes new fire by twirling; though flint and steel, also matches, are known. When a new village is founded a medicine-man stirs [782] the blood of sacrificed animals with the claws of a chicken; then he sprinkles this blood on each new house.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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ing home from labour in October wants cleared fields to sow. If he cannot find any kinsman who would give him a cleared field he will have to buy one, and will have perhaps to pay 200 escudos (£2 10s.). A man retains his rights to fields in a village he no longer inhabits.

The Ovimbundu keep cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and fowls. The cattle are not milked but are used in sacrifices, and for fines; some have been brought by Ovimbundu from Kwanyama Ambo country but they do not seem to thrive in this neighbourhood. Sheep are few. In my village goats were much less numerous than chickens or pigs. The traders and European residents buy cattle, chickens, and pigs.

Fishing and hunting are practised, but despite the ingenious fish-traps, nets, poisons and weirs used for the first, and the popular enthusiasm for, and ritual associations of the second, neither dominates the actual food supply and ecological background in the way that maize does.

The Ovimbundu believe that the dry-season grass fires also help to fertilize the soil by leaving ashes. Ashes are sometimes spread in a village garden, and dry grass may also be left in a field for this purpose. Soil beside trees is considered to be especially rich, as to some extent are the sites of former villages. There is no idea of crop rotation and a field is worked for as long as it is fertile, that is indefinitely for an *onaka* and from three to six years, sometimes more, for a field of the *epya* type. The hoe is still the standard means of cultivation and the plough is a rarity.

Coffee-growing on any scale is usually undertaken by people living away from the villages, except for the Protestants who have been encouraged by their missionaries to plant coffee in their villages. Coffee, like maize, is bought by the traders. However, at least two local coffee-growers sold their coffee at Porto Amboim on the coast to get a better price. Basically, the agricultural economy of the neighbourhood is based on maize, grown by methods of shifting cultivation. The frequency with which villages rise and fall and individuals change from one village to another is entirely consistent with this type of agriculture.

Axe and hoe blades, blankets, cloths, clothing, cutlery,